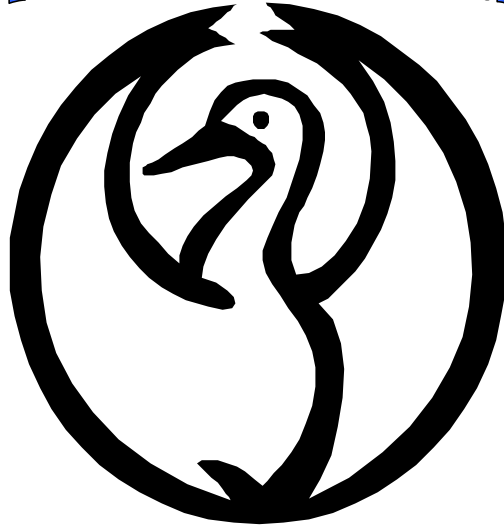


**Governor's
Domestic Violence
Elimination Council**



DOVE

May 1999 through
September 2001

For comments, please contact the DoVE Council at the address or e-mail listed below:

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Honorable Jim Geringer
Governor
Wyoming State Capitol
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Ref: Report from the Governor's Domestic Violence Elimination Council (DOVE)

Dear Governor Geringer:

Attached is the first DoVE Council report describing our activities for the past year and half. We have been meeting every other month at different locations around the state and since January 1, 2001, we have met in Cody, Newcastle, Casper, Thermopolis and Cheyenne. Our meetings consist of an evening public forum and a daytime business meeting, both of which are open to the public.

Evening discussions center around taking public comments, addressing all issues of domestic violence, receiving input from community members, law enforcement, judges, health care professional, counselors, clergy, victims of domestic violence, state and county agencies, victim advocates, safe house representatives and others. These meetings have driven the Council's agenda and the focus of the report we present to you today.

This report begins with our mission statement, how our membership is drawn, meeting locations, and a sampling of the comments received at the community forums. It continues with a list of seven goals developed from the discussions and a direction plan for the Council and ends with four recommendations, which with the help of the legislature and other state and local agencies, the Council will strive to bring to fruition.

These four recommendations include:

- 1- Establishment of a domestic violence curriculum to address training from the basic domestic violence 101 too more advanced topics. In addition that the various disciplines within the criminal justice arena, health care workers, DFS workers and mental health workers be provided with additional training every two years.
- 2- Legislators would continue to support domestic violence issues through appropriate legislation aimed at ensuring the safety of women and children in our state.
- 3- Development of standards for mediation, especially where domestic violence victims are involved.
- 4- A study by the legislature to examine the issue of funding for court appointed counsel for the petitioner in a domestic violence action. At present Wyoming Statute, section 35-21-103(e) authorizes the court to appoint counsel to represent the petitioner in a domestic violence civil action filed under the "Domestic Violence Protection Act."

I am pleased to report the enthusiasm of the members has not diminish, but has actually grown as we have traveled across our state speaking first hand with victims and service providers. While an end is not in sight, the Council is beginning to formulate solutions on how to address domestic violence problems in our society and plan on how to implement those solutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert B. Denhardt
Chairman
DOVE Council

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

By executive order in May 1999, Governor Geringer created the Domestic Violence Elimination Council (DoVE) as an aid to reduce domestic violence incidents and deaths. Occurrences of domestic violence continue to rise in Wyoming each year. The impact on families, especially children in the homes where domestic violence is occurring and the impact on neighborhoods, communities, and schools in our state is significant. Domestic violence affects individuals of our state psychologically, economically, physically and spiritually.

MISSION

The mission of the DoVE Council is to work towards the elimination domestic violence. Our overall goal is to reduce the level and seriousness of domestic violence incidents and to eliminate related deaths. The Council will provide guidance throughout the State to proactively address domestic violence issues in every community in the state. The Council will work to increase awareness among public, governmental and private agencies of the causes, effects and magnitude of domestic violence.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Council consists of 22 members appointed by the Governor to serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Council membership shall include one representative from each of the following organizations:

- ❑ Judicial Branch
- ❑ Department of Corrections
- ❑ Circuit Court
- ❑ Office of Attorney General
- ❑ Governor's Office
- ❑ Division of Victim Services
- ❑ Department of Family Services
- ❑ Department of Health
- ❑ Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs
- ❑ Wind River Indian Reservation
- ❑ Wyoming Prosecutor's Association
- ❑ Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming
- ❑ Wyoming Nurses' Association
- ❑ Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- ❑ Battered Women's Advocacy groups
- ❑ Faith Communities
- ❑ Wyoming Medical Society
- ❑ Department of Education, and
- ❑ Members of the House of Representatives and Senate.

It should be noted that since domestic violence is epidemic, many of the agency representatives are themselves survivors, and can add the perspective of the victim to our discussions.

MEETINGS

The Executive order states that the Council shall meet as often as necessary to conduct business and the Division of Victim Services and Office of the Attorney General shall provide the administrative support to the Council.

PROCESS OF GATHERING INFORMATION

The Council holds meetings around the state with an open community forum in the evening before the Council's business meeting. These forums serve as tools to gather input from community members on what they believed has already been successful or what new strategies might work in their community to reduce the levels and seriousness of domestic violence incidents in Wyoming.

From September 1999 through November 2001 the Council has met in the following communities:

- ❑ Cheyenne
- ❑ Saratoga
- ❑ Casper
- ❑ Riverton
- ❑ Gillette
- ❑ Afton
- ❑ Green River
- ❑ Thermopolis
- ❑ Buffalo
- ❑ Newcastle
- ❑ Cody
- ❑ Evanston

The majority of participants at the open community forums are county/district attorneys, victim advocates, domestic violence survivors, volunteers, law enforcement, and interested citizens.

Occasionally, Department of Family Services workers, school personnel, judges, nurses, clergy, youth workers and the media attend these open meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity to gather information regarding the effects of family violence on children, communities, and schools.

The Council also receives suggestions on new programs or services to improve our efforts in the reduction of domestic violence in Wyoming.

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS, COMMENTS, AND IDEAS FROM COMMUNITY FORUMS?

- ❑ The medical community needs to provide training in identifying and educating victims of domestic violence.
- ❑ Some individuals question if doctors should be mandated reporters of domestic abuse.
- ❑ Social workers need more training on the dynamics of domestic violence and its effects on children.
- ❑ The high turnover rate of DFS workers was a repeated concern. This is especially true for those who are responsible for child abuse investigations.
- ❑ There is a need for stronger coordination in both district and circuit courts regarding protection orders.
- ❑ County attorneys spoke in favor of continued training for all criminal justice representatives.
- ❑ One circuit court judge suggested training on domestic violence for court clerks.
- ❑ Judges expressed frustration over seeing the same victim or perpetrator repeatedly return to court on domestic violence issues.
- ❑ There was discussion on lengthening the Protection Orders from 90 days to 1 year.
- ❑ General Fund money only supports 17 domestic violence shelters in 23 counties. The Council learned there are large counties, such as Lincoln and Park, which need more than one shelter. Uniform funding must support domestic violence shelters in all counties.
- ❑ There are problems with the Central Registry for Protection Orders, including the failure of entry of orders or the fact that the orders are sometimes incomplete when sent to the Sheriff's Department for entry.
- ❑ The mandatory surrender of firearms is an issue in granting protection orders. There is apparent reluctance by some courts to seize guns not used in the crime.
- ❑ All counties visited expressed concern about the long-term effects on children who witness domestic violence.
- ❑ Clergy expressed an interest in having a seat on the Council.
- ❑ Communities and domestic violence programs need to work together; isolated programs do not get results.
- ❑ Many women are still not reporting. We need to find out why.
- ❑ The public needs to understand and be educated about the impact domestic violence has on the economics of their communities. The courts, law enforcement agencies, and batterers must be held accountable.
- ❑ More communities need batterers re-education programs. A follow-up study must be done to determine which treatments are the most successful.
- ❑ Dispatchers, ambulance workers, school bus drivers, animal control officers, and court commissioners need domestic violence training.

Overwhelmingly, what the Council heard from one third of the counties in Wyoming was:

- ❑ We need to educate all citizens to what domestic violence (physical and emotional) is and raise awareness to the devastation it is causing our state.
- ❑ We need to provide more outreach regarding of the services available.
- ❑ Both Department of Family Services and the Department of Education need to make a commitment to training their personnel on domestic violence dynamics and the effects on children.

Domestic violence is not an individual issue but a community problem, and it needs to be addressed by the community as a whole.

HOW WILL THE COUNCIL USE WHAT IT HAS LEARNED?

Within the first six months of meeting, the Council developed a strategic plan giving direction to its work and a way to utilize the information gathered at all the community forums.

- A. The Council will proactively promote the development of a system-wide response in each community to domestic violence. This will enable victims to be safe and perpetrators to be held accountable.

The Plan has seven goals:

- 1- Inform every sector of the public of the effects of domestic violence on our communities and particularly on children:
 - i. Prepare speaking/talking points for Council members
 - ii. Design a media campaign for education/conferences/conventions
 - iii. Develop a means to coordinate and utilize other groups:
public/private/education communities/service organizations/clergy/Latino coalitions, etc.
 - iv. Be creative and inclusive
- 2- Identify and eliminate barriers which prevent victims' access to services:
 - i. Cultural
 - ii. Age
 - iii. Language
 - iv. Funding
 - v. Awareness of services in local communities
 - vi. Work with local agencies on coordination of resources
 - vii. Barriers put up by law enforcement, courts and prosecutors
- 3- Increasing resources available to address the victim needs and the re-education of perpetrators:

- i. Identify the best practices that could be utilized in each community and help organize specific training
 - ii. Determine needs related to elimination or reduction of domestic violence education, awareness, etc. and explore pilot projects for possible application to certain communities
 - iii. Create a domestic violence training program for all state agencies and personnel
 - iv. Discover new technological programs which are available, i.e. Protection Order alert system, Tattle Tale type systems, etc. and determine if they would be useful
- 4- Recommend all training standards and protocols for professionals who work with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence:
 - i. Identify all groups who work with domestic violence victims and their children
 - ii. Develop basic criteria for training and protocols
 - iii. Define a mechanism for completion of training
 - iv. Find agencies/organizations to provide training
- 5- Promote an effective state-wide system for batterers re-education:
 - i. Unearth the most effective course/programs
 - ii. Find resources to enhance and continue programs
 - iii. Educate personnel of administering agencies on the effective programs
 - iv. Establish training programs for the most widely used and successful batterer's programs
 - v. Establish mandatory assessment and participation of the batterers
 - vi. Establish a certification process for programs/agencies providing batterer re-education
 - vii. Track participants
- 6- Develop a means to evaluate the DoVE Council's process, progress and impact on communities:
 - i. Establish time frames
 - ii. Establish action plans
 - iii. Use Council members, past and present, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council

- iv. Determine what statistics to evaluate and who will gather and collect those statistics
- v. Hold an annual meeting to evaluate progress

7- Work on enacting effective legislation:

- i. Gather information on needed changes
- ii. Coordinate with other state and local agencies
- iii. Solicit needed changes from victims

B. Changes proposed to make meetings more productive:

- 1- Modify membership to add representative from the Faith Community
- 2- Encourage more participation by school personnel, Department of Family Services, social workers, and the Department of Education
- 3- Encourage the evening forums to include a presentation by local service providers on what is taking place in their communities to assist victims

C. Where do we go from here?

- 1- Hold a statewide meeting with other statewide councils/committees dealing with domestic violence or batterer's re-education to review Councils strategic plan and gather statewide interagency support.
- 2- Review the Department of Health's survey of local mental health agencies on how they are treating batterers. The intent is to learn what models are successful and rate of that success.

IN CONCLUSION

During the past eighteen months, these meetings have heightened the Councils perceptiveness on the needs of the victims, by:

- ❑ Learning the dynamics of domestic violence
- ❑ Discovering the effects of domestic violence on children
- ❑ Being educated on protocols used by emergency departments to ascertain if injuries are a result of domestic violence and to address the needs of victims of domestic violence
- ❑ Listening to the tragic stories of victims and their families
- ❑ Viewing video tapes on family violence
- ❑ Seeing and hearing first hand the impact of domestic violence on our state
- ❑ Recognizing that education and outreach are a necessary resource for victims
- ❑ Being resolved in our passion and dedication to combat domestic violence and enlisting the allies and information needed for success.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- A domestic violence curriculum should be developed to address training from the basic domestic violence 101 to more advanced topics and that a minimum 5-8 hours of domestic violence training be provided (every two years) for judges, prosecutors, mental health worker, Department of Family Services workers, law enforcement officers and health care workers.
 - a. Establish an advisory committee with representatives from the Departments of Health, Education, and Family Services; Law Enforcement; Prosecutors; Medical Society; and Courts to adapt the basic curriculum specifically to the disciplines mentioned.
 - b. The Council would like to see training for all mentioned disciplines promoted through their professional organizations.
- 2- The Council should work with legislators during each session to enhance legislation to ensure the safety of women and their families and to hold batterers accountable.
 - a. Further, there should be support for an increase in state funding to domestic violence shelter programs so they may maintain a professional level of service to all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.
- 3- The development of standards for mediation, particularly when mediation is ordered in divorce cases where there is a history of domestic violence.
- 4- That the State Legislature provide funding to pay attorneys to represent indigent petitioners in domestic violence actions when the respondent hires an attorney. OR

Legislation be enacted which permits the court to appoint an attorney to represent an indigent petitioner when the respondent is represented by counsel and which authorizes the court to order the respondent to pay petitioner's attorney fees.

We would like to acknowledge current and past members who have contributed to the success of this Council and this report.

Current Members

Rep. Chris Boswell	Rosemary Bratton
Stephen Brown	Megan Briggs
Steve Gilmore	Merit Thomas
Holly Hansen	Kathleen Mordhorst
Rep. Floyd Esquibel	Senator Rae Lynn Job
Marv Wake	Helga Bindschadler
Mary Cowboy	Carol Day
Judge Robert Denhardt	Sandra Lambert
Jolene Lux	Sharon Montagnino
Hoke MacMillan	Mary Beth Wolff
Shirley Martinez	Pam Tallon Kinchen

Past Members

Jean Cochran	Rep. Doug Osborn
Senator Delaine Roberts	Gay Woodhouse
Christine Stoffers	Lee Ann Stephenson